

Claims

[c1] 1. A trailer brake controller for use in a passenger vehicle for controlling a towed trailer comprising;
a control element positioned within the passenger vehicle;
a vehicle speed input providing vehicle speed to said control element;
a vehicle brake pressure input providing vehicle brake pressure to said control element; and
a trailer brake output, said trailer brake output controlled by said control element in response to said vehicle speed input and said vehicle brake pressure input.

[c2] 2. A trailer brake controller as described in claim 1, wherein said vehicle speed input and said vehicle brake pressure input are provided by a vehicle anti-lock braking system.

[c3] 3. A trailer brake controller as described in claim 1, wherein said vehicle brake pressure input is provided by a master cylinder sensor.

[c4] 4. A trailer brake controller as described in claim 1, further comprising:
a diagnostic input in communication with said control element.

[c5] 5. A trailer brake controller as described in claim 1, further comprising:
at least one trailer brake indicator lamp output.

[c6] 6. A trailer brake controller as described in claim 1, further comprising:
an anti-lock braking activation input in communication with said control element, said anti-lock braking activation input signaling said control element when a vehicle anti-lock braking system is activated.

[c7] 7. A trailer brake controller as described in claim 1, further comprising:
at least one communication element, said at least one communication element providing communication between said control element and a vehicle occupant.

[c8] 8. A trailer brake controller as described in claim 7, wherein said at least one communication element comprises a display.

[c9] 9.A trailer brake controller as described in claim 7, wherein said at least one communication element comprises a display, a user control and a user override switch.

[c10] 10.A trailer brake controller as described in claim 8, wherein said display includes a gain display and a signal strength display.

[c11] 11.A trailer brake controller for use in a passenger vehicle for controlling a towed trailer comprising:
a control element positioned within the passenger vehicle and in communication with a vehicle anti-lock braking system;
a vehicle speed input providing vehicle speed from said vehicle anti-lock braking system to said control element;
a vehicle brake pressure input providing vehicle brake pressure from said anti-lock braking system to said control element; and
a trailer brake output, said trailer brake output controlled by said control element in response to said vehicle speed input and said vehicle brake pressure input.

[c12] 12.A trailer brake controller as described in claim 11, further comprising:
a diagnostic input in communication with said control element.

[c13] 13. A trailer brake controller as described in claim 11, further comprising:
at least one trailer brake indicator lamp output.

[c14] 14.A trailer brake controller as described in claim 11, further comprising:
an anti-lock braking activation input in communication with said control element, said anti-lock braking activation input signaling said control element when a vehicle anti-lock braking system is activated.

[c15] 15.A trailer brake controller as described in claim 11, further comprising:
at least one communication element, said at least one communication element providing communication between said control element and a vehicle occupant.

[c16] 16.A trailer brake controller as described in claim 15, wherein said at least one communication element comprises a display.

[c17] 17. A trailer brake controller as described in claim 15, wherein said at least one communication element comprises a display, a user control and a user override switch.

[c18] 18. A trailer brake controller as described in claim 17 wherein said user control comprises a gain input control.

[c19] 19. A trailer brake controller as described in claim 16, wherein said display includes a gain display and a signal strength display.

[c20] 20. A method of controlling a trailer braking system comprising:
determining vehicle speed and vehicle braking pressure through communication with an anti-lock braking system on the vehicle;
relaying the vehicle speed and vehicle braking pressure to a control element positioned on the vehicle;
using said vehicle speed and vehicle braking pressure to determine a trailer brake output signal; and
sending said trailer brake output signal to the trailer braking system.

[c21] 21. A method as described in claim 20, further comprising:
sending a diagnostic signal from the trailer braking system to said control element;
informing a vehicle occupant of said diagnostic signal through the use of a communication element.

[c22] 22. A method as described in claim 21, wherein said communication element comprises a display mounted within the vehicle dash.